United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea SPLOS/303

Meeting of States Parties

Distr.: General
2 August 2016

Original: English

Twenty-sixth Meeting
New York, 20-24 June 2016

Report of the twenty-sixth Meeting of States Parties

Contents

		Page
I.	Introduction	2
II.	Organization of work	2
	A. Opening of the Meeting and election of officers	2
	B. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work	3
III.	Credentials Committee	3
	A. Appointment of the Credentials Committee	3
	B. Report of the Credentials Committee	3
IV.	Matters related to the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea	4
	A. Report of the Tribunal for 2015	4
	B. Financial and budgetary matters	6
V.	Information on the activities of the International Seabed Authority	8
VI.	Matters related to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf	10
	A. Information reported by the Chair of the Commission	10
	B. Conditions of service of the members of the Commission	12
VII.	Election of one member of the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf	15
VIII.	Report of the Secretary-General under article 319 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea	16
IX.	Other matters	20

16-13251 (E) 010916

Please recycle

I. Introduction

1. The twenty-sixth Meeting of States Parties to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea was held at United Nations Headquarters from 20 to 24 June 2016,[1] in accordance with article 319, paragraph 2 (e), of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (the Convention)[2] and paragraph 48 of General Assembly resolution 70/235.

2. The Meeting was attended by the representatives of States Parties to the Convention[3] and observers,[4] including the International Seabed Authority[5] (the Authority), the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf[6] (the Commission) and the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (the Tribunal).[7,8]

II. Organization of work

A. Opening of the Meeting and election of officers

3. Kriangsak Kittichaisaree (Thailand), President of the twenty-fifth Meeting of States Parties, opened the twenty-sixth Meeting.

4. The Meeting observed a minute of silent prayer or meditation.

5. The Meeting elected Georgina Guillén Grillo (Costa Rica) as President of the twenty-sixth Meeting of States Parties, by acclamation.

6. The Meeting elected Mehdi Remaoun (Algeria), Kristján Andri Stefánsson (Iceland), Nicolae Comanescu (Romania), and Amrith Rohan Perera (Sri Lanka), as Vice-Presidents, by acclamation.

Statement by the Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs and United Nations Legal Counsel

7. The Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs and United Nations Legal Counsel highlighted the continued relevance and important role of the Convention in strengthening international peace and security and ensuring sustainable development of the oceans and seas. He recalled that, in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,[9] Member States had recognized the importance of the oceans and seas for sustainable development. In particular, target 14.c called for enhancement of the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources by implementing international law, as reflected in the Convention. He also recalled

[1] Statements submitted by delegations for circulation, as well as relevant documents and information provided by the secretariat at the twenty-sixth Meeting of States Parties are available through the online portal PaperSmart at https://papersmart.unmeetings.org/convention-treaty/los/un-los/26th-meeting/agenda/.
[2] United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1833, No. 31363.
[3] See rule 5 of the Rules of Procedure for Meetings of States Parties (SPLOS/2/Rev.4).
[4] See rule 18 of the Rules of Procedure.
[5] See rule 18, para. 2 and rule 37 of the Rules of Procedure.
[6] See rule 18, of the Rules of Procedure.
[7] See rules 37 and 38 of the Rules of Procedure.
[8] For a list of participants at the twenty-sixth Meeting of States Parties, see SPLOS/INF/30.
[9] General Assembly resolution 70/1.

that the legal framework of the Convention allowed for further elaboration of specific areas of the law of the sea to address particular challenges concerning the oceans. He referred, in this context, to the work of the Preparatory Committee established by the General Assembly in resolution 69/292 and underlined the centrality of the Convention in the development of an international legally binding instrument on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction.

B. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work

8. After the President introduced the provisional agenda (SPLOS/L.77), the representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland requested that item 11(d), entitled "Proposal by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland for a mechanism to scrutinize budgets of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea", not be included in the agenda of the twenty-sixth Meeting, noting that delegations were still engaged in informal consultations on the matter and expressing the hope that further intersessional work would enable the United Kingdom to make a new proposal at a later Meeting. The Meeting then adopted the agenda, as amended (SPLOS/299).

9. Following consultations with the Bureau, the President put forward proposals regarding the organization of work. The Meeting approved the organization of work on the understanding that it could be adjusted, as necessary, in order to ensure the efficient conduct of the Meeting.

III. Credentials Committee

A. Appointment of the Credentials Committee

10. On 20 June 2016, pursuant to rule 14 of the Rules of Procedure for Meetings of States Parties (SPLOS/2/Rev.4), the Meeting appointed a Credentials Committee consisting of the following nine States parties: Bulgaria, Ecuador, Gabon, Guatemala, Morocco, Nepal, State of Palestine, Sweden and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Statements were made by one State party and two observer States to the effect that they could not recognize the State of Palestine as a sovereign State. As a result, in their view, it could not accede to the Convention and serve as a Party to the Convention on any of the subsidiary bodies of the Meeting. Another delegation noted with appreciation the appointment of the State of Palestine to the Credentials Committee.

11. The Credentials Committee held meetings on 22 and 23 June 2016. Mohammed Atlassi (Morocco) was elected as Chair and Lowri Mai Griffiths (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland) was elected as Vice-Chair, by acclamation.

B. Report of the Credentials Committee

12. The Chair of the Credentials Committee introduced the report of the Committee (SPLOS/300) on 23 June 2016, and provided an update to the report on

24 June 2016. He stated that the Committee had examined and accepted the credentials of representatives to the twenty-sixth Meeting from 127 States Parties, out of which 85 were in due form and 42 were received on the understanding that formal credentials would be communicated to the secretariat as soon as possible.[10] The Chair also noted that information had been received from the delegation of the European Union to the United Nations concerning the appointment of representatives.

13. The Meeting approved the report of the Credentials Committee, on the understanding[11] that the credentials would continue to be valid, in accordance with rule 1 of the Rules of Procedure until the twenty-seventh Meeting convenes.

IV. Matters related to the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea

A. Report of the Tribunal for 2015

14. The President of the Tribunal, Judge Vladimir Golitsyn, introduced the annual report for 2015 (SPLOS/294) and provided an overview of the judicial activities of the Tribunal and the work carried out during the last two sessions devoted to legal, organizational and administrative matters, namely, the thirty-ninth and fortieth sessions.

15. The President recalled that the resumed twenty-fifth Meeting of States Parties elected Judge Antonio Cachapuz de Medeiros (Brazil) to serve as a member of the Tribunal for the remainder of his predecessor's term, namely, until 30 September 2017.

16. He also informed the Meeting that, on 9 March 2016, Philippe Gautier had been re-elected as Registrar of the Tribunal for five years.

17. The President noted the continued increase in the judicial activities of the Tribunal in 2015, drawing attention to the wide range of substantive and procedural issues dealt with.

18. With regard to the *Request for an Advisory Opinion submitted by the Sub-Regional Fisheries Commission (SRFC)*, the President pointed out that, while the Advisory Opinion aimed at providing assistance to the Sub-Regional Fisheries Commission in the performance of its activities and contributing to the implementation of the Convention, it might well be of value to all those engaged in preventing and deterring illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing activities in other areas.

19. The President then referred to the *Dispute Concerning Delimitation of the Maritime Boundary between Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire in the Atlantic Ocean (Ghana/Côte d'Ivoire)*, submitted to a special chamber and highlighted the order for

[10] Following the report of the Credentials Committee, the secretariat received formal credentials for the representatives of Iraq, Jordan, Trinidad and Tobago, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Zimbabwe, as well as information concerning the appointment of representatives from Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Croatia, Equatorial Guinea, Guyana, and Liberia.

[11] See SPLOS/263, para. 101.

provisional measures adopted by the Special Chamber on 25 April 2015. He also referred to *The "Enrica Lexie" Incident (Italy v. India)* and the order for provisional measures delivered by the Tribunal on 25 August 2015.

20. The President further noted that a new case had been instituted by Panama against Italy regarding the arrest and detention of the vessel *M/V "Norstar"*, and pointed out that the hearing on the preliminary objections raised by Italy would take place in September 2016.

21. He informed the Meeting about the events organized to mark the twentieth anniversary of the Tribunal, in particular a symposium to be held on 5 and 6 October 2016 at its premises regarding the contribution of the Tribunal to the rule of law, and a ceremony on 7 October 2016, at the City Hall of Hamburg, which would be attended by the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the President of the Federal Republic of Germany. He added that the Tribunal had set up a special trust fund to support those activities and welcomed any contributions to it.

22. In the ensuing discussions, delegations welcomed the forthcoming twentieth anniversary of the establishment of the Tribunal, as well as the events to commemorate it.

23. Several delegations highlighted the workload of the Tribunal, the scope of its activities, the efficiency with which it had delivered its decisions, its increasing contribution to the interpretation of the Convention and international law and to the progressive development of the law of the sea, as well as its role in the peaceful settlement of disputes and the maintenance of order under the Convention.

24. Reference was made by a number of delegations to the orders on provisional measures in the *Dispute concerning Delimitation of the Maritime Boundary between Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire in the Atlantic Ocean* and *The "Enrica Lexie" Incident (Italy v. India)*.

25. Several delegations commended the Tribunal for the advisory opinion of 2 April 2015 concerning the request submitted by the Sub-Regional Fisheries Commission, particularly noting that it had confirmed the jurisdiction of the Tribunal to deliver advisory opinions if an international agreement related to the purposes of the Convention provided for the submission to the Tribunal of a request for such an opinion. It was also noted that the opinion provided helpful clarifications regarding due diligence obligations of flag States under the Convention and the manner in which coastal and flag States needed to cooperate towards the conservation and sustainable use of living resources, as well as guidance on how to address the threat of illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing. An observer delegation expressed the view that the Convention, including the Statute of the Tribunal contained in its annex VI, did not expressly provide for any advisory jurisdiction beyond that bestowed upon the Seabed Disputes Chamber. It also noted that the advisory opinion dealt with broad fisheries-related rights and obligations of coastal States and flag States under the Convention beyond the scope of the underlying regional fisheries agreement. Several delegations expressed appreciation for the training and capacity-building programmes of the Tribunal, as well as for the contributions made to the voluntary trust funds of the Tribunal to assist in its education, training and capacity-building functions. A delegation encouraged the Tribunal to maintain its calendar of regional workshops, especially in those regions where its work was not well known.

26. The Meeting took note of the report of the Tribunal for 2015.

B. Financial and budgetary matters

1. Report on budgetary matters for the financial periods 2013-2014 and 2015-2016

27. The Registrar of the Tribunal introduced the report on budgetary matters for the financial periods 2013-2014 and 2015-2016 (SPLOS/295), covering the matters outlined below.

(a) Surrender of cash surplus for the financial period 2013-2014

28. The Registrar outlined the information contained in section I of the report, recalling in particular that the cash surplus for the 2013-2014 financial period amounted to €1,837,669. He noted that the cash surplus would be surrendered to States parties and deducted from their contributions for 2017, in accordance with regulation 4.5 of the Financial Regulations of the Tribunal.

29. Several delegations took note of the cash surplus for the financial period 2013-2014, and welcomed the fact that it would be surrendered to States parties and deducted from their contributions for 2017, provided that their contribution for the financial period of 2013-2014 had been paid in full.

(b) Provisional performance report for 2015

30. The Registrar outlined the information contained in section II of the report, recalling in particular that the total expenditure for 2015 provisionally amounted to €9,681,068, which represented 97.34 per cent of the appropriations allocated for 2015.

31. Several delegations noted with satisfaction the high performance rate, highlighting the increase in performance as compared to the previous biennium. They also noted with satisfaction that the Tribunal had been able to make savings within its approved budget, and commended the Registrar for his sound budget management. One delegation affirmed its support of the proposals contained in the report, noting these were intended to increase the efficiency of the financial administration of the Tribunal.

32. With regard to the high performance rate and to the fluctuations in the exchange rate of currencies which had in part contributed to such high performance, a view was expressed that the Registrar should examine possible ways to alleviate the impact of currency fluctuations and should refine budget estimates regarding case-related costs, in the light of past performance. Another view was expressed that the Registrar should be encouraged to offset possible additional expenditures through savings. In response to the statements by delegations, the Registrar expressed his appreciation to States for their comments. He assured States of the continued efforts of the Tribunal to avoid any excesses in expenditures, emphasizing that the overexpenditures were due to reasons beyond the control of the Tribunal, like exchange rate fluctuations and the fact that the Tribunal had dealt with two urgent proceedings in 2015 and would handle a third case in 2016, while the budget had only provided for two such cases.

(c) Report on action taken pursuant to the financial regulations and rules of the Tribunal

33. The Registrar referred to paragraphs 18 to 25 of document SPLOS/295 regarding the investment of funds of the Tribunal, the Trust Fund for the Law of the Sea, the Nippon Foundation Trust Fund, the China Institute of International Studies Trust Fund and the Twentieth Anniversary Trust Fund.

34. In that connection, one delegation declared its intention to make contributions to the Nippon Foundation-International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea capacity-building and training programme on dispute settlement under the Convention, as well as to the Twentieth Anniversary Trust Fund.

35. The Meeting took note, with appreciation, of the report on budgetary matters for the financial periods 2013-2014 and 2015-2016 (SPLOS/295).

2. Appointment of auditor for financial years 2017-2020

36. The Registrar presented document SPLOS/296 relating to the appointment of an auditor for the financial years 2017-2020 and drew attention to the quotations of six different audit firms contained therein.

37. The Meeting decided to appoint the accounting firm, BDO, in view of the price-quality ratio of its quotation, as auditor for the financial years 2017-2020.

3. Draft budget proposals of the Tribunal for 2017-2018

38. The Registrar introduced the draft budget proposals of the Tribunal for the financial period 2017-2018 (SPLOS/2016/WP.1), noting that the proposed budget in the amount of €21,119,900 (see SPLOS/2016/WP.1, annex I), represented an increase of €2,302,300 compared to the budget approved for the 2015-2016 period (SPLOS/275). He further noted that, with the exception of case-related expenditures, the amount of which always depended on the judicial workload of the Tribunal, the budget for 2017-2018 followed an overall zero-growth approach compared with the equivalent value in euros of the 2015-2016 budget. The Registrar underlined that the increase envisaged for the 2017-2018 budget was due mainly to reasons beyond the control of the Tribunal, and that it may be substantially offset by deductions from the cash surplus relating to the 2013-2014 budget (see para. 28 above), which amounted to €1,837,669.

39. In the ensuing discussions, delegations expressed their appreciation for the efforts of the Tribunal to contain the budget increase. Many delegations acknowledged, in this context, that the increase in the proposed budget as compared to the last biennium was due mainly to reasons beyond the control of the Tribunal, such as the appreciation of the United States dollar as compared to the euro, an increased caseload, and pension schemes.

40. Several delegations supported the draft budget as proposed by the Tribunal and stressed the need to support and strengthen its activities and to provide the necessary resources to ensure an efficient and effective functioning of the Tribunal.

41. With regard to the principles that should be applied in the preparation of the budget, other delegations emphasized that a zero nominal growth approach should be followed, recognizing, however, issues that were beyond the control of the Tribunal, such as the exchange-rate fluctuations, an increased caseload, and pension

schemes. With respect to the proposed budget increase of more than 12 per cent, some delegations proposed a reduction in some budget lines of lower priority. Several delegations encouraged the Registrar, in implementing the budget, to continue to make savings, on the understanding that the Tribunal would continue to operate under normal circumstances, and to ensure the optimal use of resources, particularly in the light of the financial constraints currently faced by governments worldwide. Other delegations underlined the need for striking a balance between the principle of zero nominal growth and an approach that would acknowledge the increased workload of the Tribunal.

42. Further discussions on these matters were held in the context of the Open-ended Working Group on Financial and Budgetary Matters. On the basis of the recommendation of the Working Group, the Meeting adopted, by consensus, a decision in which it approved the amount of €21,119,900 as the budget of the Tribunal for 2017-2018 (SPLOS/301), as proposed by the Tribunal (SPLOS/2016/WP.1).

4. Nomination of a member and an alternate member to the staff pension committee of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea

43. The Meeting considered the note by the Tribunal on the nomination of a member and an alternate member to the staff pension committee of the Tribunal and the draft decision contained in its annex (SPLOS/297). It subsequently adopted a decision extending the nominations of Indonesia as member and Canada as alternate member of the staff pension committee for a three-year term of office starting on 1 July 2016 (SPLOS/302).

V. Information on the activities of the International Seabed Authority

44. The Secretary-General of the Authority provided information on the activities carried out by the Authority since the twenty-fifth Meeting of States Parties.

45. Encouraging all States parties to attend the forthcoming twenty-second session of the Authority, which would be held in Kingston from 4 to 22 July 2016, the Secretary-General noted that the session would address important matters such as the election of members of the Legal and Technical Commission, the Finance Committee and the Council and the election of the Secretary-General of the Authority; the consideration by the Legal and Technical Commission of the recommended template for the annual reports of contractors; consideration by the Council of the procedures and criteria for the extension of approved plans of work for exploration; and consideration by the Assembly of the interim report of the committee established to oversee the periodic review of the international regime of the Area, in accordance with article 154 of the Convention.

46. The Secretary-General of the Authority informed the meeting that the Council would also consider how to deal with legal questions arising from the potential conflicts between the right of all States to carry out marine scientific research in the Area and the duty of the Authority to guarantee to contractors exclusive rights to carry out exploration in areas allocated under contracts for exploration, and that the secretariat was finalizing a report on the matter (ISBA/22/C/3).

47. With respect to the periodic review of the international regime of the Area, in accordance with article 154 of the Convention, the Secretary-General of the Authority noted that the review committee was expected to present an interim report in 2016, and the final report in 2017.

48. In the ensuing discussions, many delegations commended the continuing work of the Authority with respect to the development of a regulatory framework for the exploitation of the mineral resources of the Area. They expressed the view that the regulatory framework should reflect a balance between the need to ensure both environmental protection and commercial feasibility; as well as ensuring that activities in the Area were carried out for the benefit of mankind as a whole. Concern was expressed by a delegation that the workload of the Legal and Technical Commission might adversely affect the preparation of the zero draft of the regulations.

49. A number of delegations noted the steady increase in the work facing the Legal and Technical Commission and the secretariat of the Authority, both in terms of volume and complexity. In that regard, the steps which have been taken to address the workload were noted with appreciation. As a possible option to alleviate the workload of the Legal and Technical Commission, some delegations proposed to increase the membership of the Commission. The view was expressed that working procedures of the Commission could be further streamlined. It was also highlighted that options should have due regard for the economy and efficiency of the work of the Commission.

50. Some delegations noted with appreciation the decision to conduct a general and systematic review of the manner in which the international regime of the Area established in the Convention has operated in practice, pursuant to article 154 of the Convention and the work carried out thus far in that regard. It was anticipated that the review would produce recommendations aimed at improving the efficiency and maintaining the integrity of the Authority.

51. Several delegations also noted that, in the context of the periodic review, it would be appropriate to discuss the possible expansion of the mandate of the Authority. In this connection, they observed that suggestions to that effect had been made during the first session of the preparatory committee established by the General Assembly in its resolution 69/292: development of an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction. It was noted that the Authority had expertise in conducting work on environmental impact assessment and in capacity-building and the transfer of marine technology.

52. The view was expressed that the extension of exploration contracts should confirm the existing provisions and obligations contained therein. Therefore, new obligations for the contractor should not be added at the time of the extension. It was noted that the extension of contracts should be granted in order to make it possible for the contractors to complete their work. Some States noted that their role as sponsor States was one that they took seriously and would carry out fully.

53. Appreciation was expressed for the capacity-building activities and workshops organized by the Authority. In that connection, the view was expressed that those activities should be expanded beyond those which were provided to nationals of

developing States as a condition for the issuance of contracts for exploration by the Authority. A suggestion was made that contractors offer more training fellowships than contractually obliged to.

54. The conduct of capacity-building activities carried out by States was noted.

55. Concern about the lack of attendance at meetings of the Authority was raised by some delegations. A call was made for greater participation by States in the work of the Authority and accession to the Protocol on Privileges and Immunity of the Authority.

56. The Meeting took note of the information reported by the Secretary-General of the Authority.

VI. Matters related to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf

A. Information reported by the Chair of the Commission

57. The Chair of the Commission, Lawrence Folajimi Awosika, made a statement providing information on the activities carried out by the Commission since the twenty-fifth Meeting of States Parties (see SPLOS/298),[12] including on the consideration of submissions and approval of recommendations by the Commission, the workload of the Commission and the conditions of service of its members, as well as on the vacancy owing to the resignation of one member of the Commission.

58. In the ensuing discussion, many delegations expressed their appreciation and support for the work of the Commission, especially in the light of the challenges faced by it with respect to its high workload and working conditions. They highlighted the vital role of the Commission in the implementation of the Convention, noting that the outer limits of the continental shelf also marked the limits of the Area. The contribution of the Commission to the balancing of legitimate rights and interests of coastal States with those of the international community was also noted.

59. Several delegations welcomed the significant progress made by the Commission in dealing with its workload, commending its efforts to increase its efficiency. A number of delegations specifically expressed appreciation for the increased number of submissions considered during the current term of office of the Commission, facilitated by the increase in the duration of its sessions. Many delegations, however, remained concerned with regard to the number and complexity of submissions still in the queue.

60. The continued vacancy in the Commission and the absences of some members were identified by a number of delegations as unfavourable circumstances negatively impacting the fulfilment of the mandate of the Commission. Recalling the resources spent by submitting States in the preparation of their submissions to the Commission, the timely consideration of those submissions was deemed crucial by a number of delegations, in view of the challenges, especially for developing

[12] For detailed information on the work of the Commission during its thirty-eighth, thirty-ninth and fortieth sessions, see the statements by the Chair found in documents CLCS/90, CLCS/91 and CLCS/93, respectively.

States, with respect to the retention of technical teams, expertise, and current software up to and during the consideration of their submissions by the Commission.

61. In this context, concern was raised by some delegations regarding the fact that some submissions were being deferred, seemingly indefinitely, as a result of objections made by third States under rule 46 and annex I to the rules of procedure of the Commission (CLCS/40/Rev.1). It was pointed out that the scientific assessment and the recommendations of the Commission were without prejudice to the entitlement to and natural prolongation of the land territory of neighbouring States and matters relating to the delimitation of boundaries between States, and that any disputes with respect to overlapping entitlements would need to be resolved through peaceful negotiations. It was, however, also noted that the decision by the Commission to defer consideration of a submission owing to the existence of disputes was consistent with its rules of procedure. Another view was expressed that amending the rules of procedure of the Commission could enable it to consider all submissions.

62. Some delegations took note of the concerns raised by the Chair of the Commission with regard to how the classification of the material contained in a submission as confidential under annex II to the rules of procedure of the Commission may have an impact on the pace at which the Commission can consider that submission. Another delegation expressed the view that the Commission could expedite its work by following its precedents, thus also increasing predictability and efficiency.

63. In response to the observation of the Chair of the Commission concerning the impact of certain trends that have emerged in the practice of delegations when interacting with the subcommissions (SPLOS/298, para. 12), the view was expressed that the need for expeditious consideration of submissions should not be at the expense of the interests of submitting States that are re-evaluating their submission, in particular to respond to the questions and observations made by a subcommission.

64. Some delegations expressed views on the submissions made by their respective Governments and, in some cases, on the recommendations issued in regard to them by the Commission.

65. The secretariat, provided information on the status of the two trust funds it administers, which relate to the Commission. With regard to the *Voluntary Trust Fund for the purpose of defraying the cost of participation of the members of the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf from developing States in the meetings of the Commission*, the Meeting was informed that, since its last Meeting, contributions had been received from China, Costa Rica, Iceland, Japan, Mexico, Portugal and the Republic of Korea, and that the balance, as at the end of May 2016, was approximately $260,000. Highlighting the funding shortfall of approximately $120,000 for the remainder of 2016, it was stressed that, without additional contributions, the trust fund would not be in a position to provide financial assistance to support the participation of members of the Commission from developing States in its forty-second session, starting in October 2016, and beyond. Such a situation would imply that the Commission would not be able to reach the quorum required for its sessions.

66. With regard to the *Voluntary Trust Fund for the purpose of facilitating the preparation of submissions to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf for developing States, in particular the least developed countries and small island developing States, in compliance with article 76 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea*, the Meeting was informed that, since its last Meeting, a contribution had been received from Costa Rica, and that the balance, as at the end of May 2016, was approximately $900,000. It was recalled that by General Assembly resolution 70/235, the terms of reference of the trust fund had been amended to allow for the provision of assistance to developing States to meet the travel and daily subsistence allowance costs associated with meeting with the Commission and its subcommissions during consideration of their submissions. It was noted that the forthcoming forty-first session of the Commission would be the first one for which States would be able to request such assistance.

67. Delegations expressed concern over the rapidly decreasing balance and, in particular, the funding shortfall for the remainder of 2016 of the trust fund for facilitating participation of Commission members from developing countries. In this regard, several delegations expressed appreciation to States parties for making or pledging contributions to the trust fund. The Meeting reiterated its urgent appeal to States that are in a position to do so to make voluntary contributions to this trust fund in order to enable the Commission to fulfil its mandate for the remainder of its term of office and beyond. In that context, some delegations declared their intention to make contributions in 2016.

68. Several delegations welcomed the financial assistance to developing States attending meetings with the Commission, available now through the trust fund for facilitating the preparation of submissions.

69. In response to the statements by delegations, and on behalf of the Commission, the Chair emphasized that the Commission was discharging its duties under the Convention with a high degree of scientific expertise and in line with the Convention, the scientific and technical guidelines and the rules of procedure of the Commission. He noted that the processes involved in the consideration of a submission ensured fairness and consistency. He assured States parties that the Commission would continue to fulfil its mandate impartially and effectively to the benefit of the global community.

70. The Meeting took note of the information reported by the Chair of the Commission and provided by the secretariat.

B. Conditions of service of the members of the Commission

71. The Meeting recalled that, at its twenty-fifth Meeting, States parties had adopted a decision regarding the conditions of service of the members of the Commission, focusing in particular on working space needs and medical insurance coverage (see SPLOS/286).

72. With regard to the issue of working space, the Meeting recalled that, in paragraph 93 of resolution 70/235, the General Assembly had noted with concern the urgent challenges that the current working conditions placed on the Commission and had requested the Secretary-General to provide cost-effective, transportable, non-structural improvements to address some of the immediate working space needs

of the Commission. In this regard, the secretariat informed the Meeting of the implementation of that resolution through the recent improvements of the working space of the Commission.

73. The Co-coordinator of the Open-ended Working Group, James Waweru (Kenya), informed the Meeting of the work carried out by the Open-ended Working Group since the last Meeting. He recalled that the reimbursement of the costs of medical travel insurance for members from developing States through the *Voluntary Trust Fund for the purpose of defraying the cost of participation of the members of the Commission from developing States in the meetings of the Commission* had been implemented, as an interim measure, in accordance with paragraph 80 of General Assembly resolution 69/245 and paragraph 89 of resolution 70/235. The Open-ended Working Group continued its work during the Meeting.

74. The Chief of the Health and Life Insurance Section of the United Nations reported that the Secretariat was exploring options for a system-wide solution with respect to medical insurance coverage for non-staff members of the United Nations. In response to a question, he clarified that no other body in a similar situation or status as the Commission had so far required medical insurance coverage.

75. In the ensuing discussions, delegations noted with appreciation the work done by the Working Group and its Co-coordinators and welcomed the steps taken pursuant to General Assembly resolution 70/235 with respect to improvements in the working space of the Commission. The need for further efforts to improve the working conditions was stressed by many delegations, in particular the need to find more permanent solutions with respect to medical insurance and working space. A number of delegations also identified the need to address further conditions of service related to the long sessions at United Nations Headquarters, such as the loss of income and career opportunities. In this context, a number of delegations urged States to continue supporting the Commission on this matter within the Meeting and in the General Assembly to find creative solutions as soon as possible. Many delegations emphasized that the Commission needed the necessary resources and conditions of service to carry out its important functions, noting in particular the high workload of the Commission and the fact that the improvement of the conditions of service of members of the Commission was directly linked to a greater efficiency and productivity of the Commission.

76. Several delegations recalled the obligation of States parties to defray the expenses of members nominated by them in accordance with the Convention, including medical coverage. A delegation expressed the view that the provision of adequate working facilities at United Nations Headquarters was not the responsibility of nominating States. A view was expressed that the improvement of working conditions should not impose a heavy financial burden on States.

77. The Meeting took note of the report of the Co-coordinator of the Working Group. It decided that the Open-ended Working Group would continue to work intersessionally on the conditions of service of members of the Commission as contained in paragraph 77 of the report on the twenty-third Meeting of States Parties (SPLOS/263). In addition, the Meeting recalled that, at the resumed twenty-fifth Meeting in January 2016, Alex Lennox-Marwick (New Zealand) had indicated that she would not be in a position to continue serving as co-coordinator of the Open-ended Working Group beyond March 2016 and that informal consultations to identify her successor were being conducted. It further recalled that that Meeting

had decided that a successor to Ms. Lennox-Marwick would be appointed at the twenty-sixth Meeting and that, in the interim period, the Working Group would be coordinated by the other co-coordinator, Mr. Waweru. Noting that consultations were still ongoing, delegations stressed the importance of the work of the Open-ended Working Group and the need to appoint a second co-coordinator as soon as possible.

78. The Meeting further decided to take up and review matters related to the conditions of service of the members of the Commission at the twenty-seventh Meeting of States Parties under the item "Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf."

79. On the basis of a proposal by the Open-ended Working Group, the Meeting urged States parties that would nominate candidates for future elections of members of the Commission to formally undertake to support their candidates in accordance with article 2, paragraph 5, of annex II to the Convention. In this regard, developing States could request financial assistance from the Voluntary Trust Fund, as needed. Such an undertaking could be provided in the form of a note verbale that would accompany the nomination of a candidate to the Commission and would be brought to the attention of the Meeting of States Parties at the time of the election of the members of the Commission.

80. With respect to the issue of attendance of members of the Commission at the meetings of the Commission and its subcommissions, the Meeting appealed to States to ensure the full participation of the members of the Commission nominated by them in the work of the Commission, including by not scheduling conflicting activities for those members during the sessions of the Commission.

81. In response to the statements by delegations, and on behalf of the Commission, the Chair expressed his gratitude for the understanding and support of States parties, the Open-ended Working Group and the secretariat in improving the conditions of service of the members of the Commission. He noted with appreciation the improvements to the working space of the Commission. With regard to other conditions of service and the continuously high workload of the Commission, the Chair called upon States to find more permanent solutions. He reiterated in that context that, when addressing conditions of service of members of the Commission, no distinction should be made between members from developing and developed States.

82. Recalling the decision taken by the twenty-first Meeting of States Parties on the workload of the Commission (SPLOS/229), which, in paragraph 1, had requested the Commission to consider meeting at United Nations Headquarters for 21 to 26 weeks a year, the Meeting noted that that request had been "for a period of five years" and that it would be reviewed at the twenty-sixth Meeting of States Parties with a view to assessing progress in reducing the projected timeline in the workload of the Commission.

83. It was emphasized that a firm understanding on the expected annual number of weeks of meetings of the Commission in its next term of office would provide the necessary clarity for States that may consider nominating a candidate for the election of 21 members of the Commission at the twenty-seventh Meeting of States Parties in June 2017, since that number had direct financial implications for nominating States and required the availability of potential candidates for extended

periods at United Nations Headquarters. It was further highlighted that this information was also necessary to determine the financial needs of the secretariat related to the servicing of the Commission, for the purpose of preparing the budget of the Office of Legal Affairs for the biennium 2018-2019.

84. Subsequently, the Meeting decided to renew the request made by the twenty-first Meeting of States Parties and to request the Commission to consider, in coordination with the secretariat, as from 16 June 2017, within the existing resources made available to the secretariat, that the Commission, and its subcommissions meeting simultaneously as far as possible, meet at United Nations Headquarters for up to 26 weeks, but not less than an intended minimum of 21 weeks, per year for a period of five years, distributed in such a way that the Commission determines to be the most effective, and that no two sessions be sequential.

85. The Meeting further decided to request the Commission to prepare a plan of sessions to be held in 2017 on the basis of the request of the twenty-sixth Meeting of States Parties for approval by the General Assembly at its seventy-first session.

VII. Election of one member of the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf

86. The President noted that no candidate had been nominated during the nomination period in advance of the twenty-sixth Meeting, which had expired on 9 May 2016, and that no late nomination had subsequently been received.

87. The representative of Bulgaria, as the delegation chairing the Group of Eastern European States for June 2016, indicated that consultations within the Group were continuing with a view to presenting a candidate for election at a possible resumed twenty-sixth Meeting of States Parties.

88. In the ensuing discussions, the President noted that the by-election concerned only the remainder of the term of office, which would end in June 2017. Therefore, considering the time necessary from the call for nominations to the date of election at a potential resumed meeting, any elected member could at best participate only in the last session of the current term of office of the Commission, namely, the forty-third session, from the end of January until March 2017.

89. The need to restore full membership in the Commission as soon as possible was highlighted by several delegations. It was recalled that candidates nominated to the Commission needed to have the necessary qualifications, as required by the Convention, and be available to attend the minimum of 21 weeks of meetings held at United Nations Headquarters each year.

90. The Meeting subsequently decided that, if the Eastern European Group of States informed the President of the Meeting no later than 23 September 2016 that candidates had been identified, a new call for nominations would be circulated by the Secretary-General. A resumed Meeting would then be convened in order to conduct the by-election before the forty-third session of the Commission. This would allow the new member to attend the last session of the current term of office of the Commission.

VIII. Report of the Secretary-General under article 319 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea

91. The Meeting considered the annual reports of the Secretary-General on oceans and the law of the sea (A/70/74/Add.1 and A/71/74), which had been submitted to the States Parties pursuant to article 319 of the Convention. Delegations expressed their appreciation to the Secretary-General and to the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea for the useful and comprehensive reports.

92. With regard to the mandate of the Meeting of States Parties to discuss matters of a substantive nature relating to the implementation of the Convention, some delegations were of the view that the Meeting should limit itself to the consideration of financial and administrative matters relating to the bodies established by the Convention, namely, the Tribunal, the Authority and the Commission, as prescribed under the Convention. In that connection, it was emphasized that the Meeting should not be regarded as a forum for discussion and resolution of particular disputes concerning the application and interpretation of the Convention.

93. Delegations reaffirmed that the Convention sets out the legal framework within which all activities in the oceans and seas must be carried out. A number of delegations highlighted its role as the Constitution for the oceans, including in maintaining international peace and security, settling disputes peacefully and ensuring sustainable use of the oceans and their resources. The need to maintain the delicate balance between the rights and obligations under the Convention was stressed by some delegations in that regard. Some delegations observed that the Convention was part of customary international law, while another delegation considered that customary rules would apply to matters not covered by the Convention. It was also observed that the Convention was the most successful international instrument since the adoption of the Charter of the United Nations in the light of its widespread application by States and the growing number of its parties.

94. An observer delegation expressed the view that the Convention should not be considered as the only legal framework governing activities at sea, noting that there were other relevant international instruments which, together with the Convention, shaped the law of the sea. In its view, therefore, the Convention did not reflect customary international law. It also observed that participation in the Convention was not universal.

95. The importance of the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity was emphasized. Several delegations highlighted the importance of the development of an international legally binding instrument under the Convention on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction. In that regard, one delegation underlined the importance of a global regime that would overcome fragmentation. It was further noted that this instrument would be an important tool in filling the legal gaps in the Convention and assisting the international community in building a safe and prosperous world that preserved natural resources while taking into consideration future generations. In this regard, some delegations drew attention to the importance of the common heritage of mankind and benefits-sharing and South-South cooperation. The need for integrated approach and cross-border cooperation in areas of the high-seas where the continental shelf extends beyond 200 nautical miles was also emphasized. The

role of regional bodies in this regard was highlighted. An observer delegation called for the application of mandatory environmental impact assessments for marine geo-engineering activities in the Area, consensual regulation of marine genetic resources of the Area, including benefit-sharing, and the expansion of marine protected areas in the Area for the benefit of mankind, in accordance with the precautionary approach. The progress made at the first session of the preparatory committee established by the General Assembly in resolution 69/292 was highlighted by several delegations, which also expressed their appreciation and support to His Excellency Eden Charles of Trinidad and Tobago as Chair of the preparatory committee.

96. Several delegations emphasized the importance of the oceans and the Convention towards achieving sustainable development. In that context, several delegations recalled the vital role of oceans and seas for life on earth and with regard to the three pillars of sustainable development, drawing attention to the array of essential services provided by the oceans. Some delegations also highlighted the role of the oceans in alleviating poverty, achieving food security and promoting gender equality and empowerment of women. Several delegations also drew attention to the increasing anthropogenic threats to the oceans, including overfishing, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, pollution from various sources, alien invasive species, eutrophication, habitat destruction and the impacts of climate change and ocean acidification. In this regard, the need for special attention to the vulnerabilities of small island developing States was stressed and the importance of the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway was underlined.

97. References were made to the commitments contained in "The future we want," 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement. Several delegations also highlighted the importance of the Convention in fulfilling the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda, in particular goal 14, "Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources", and its targets, including target 14.c. An observer delegation recalled the reservation it had made to target 14.c. A number of delegations welcomed the convening of the high-level United Nations conference to support the implementation of sustainable development goal 14, to be held in Fiji in June 2017, which would coincide with World Oceans Day. The possible role of the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea as a forum to follow-up on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, in particular goal 14, was also stressed. The need for an integrated approach as well as for cooperation and coordination among all ocean-related agencies was emphasized. The importance of education and awareness raising to conserve the marine environment, including through World Oceans Day, was highlighted.

98. Several delegations drew attention to the work of the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea, and welcomed the topic of focus of its seventeenth meeting, marine debris, plastics and microplastics. A number of delegations expressed concern regarding the devastating impact of marine debris and plastics, and noted the need for national, regional and global initiatives to address the challenge. Reference was made to the ongoing work by other bodies, such as the United Nations Environment Programme.

99. The need to enhance scientific knowledge of the marine environment was highlighted by some delegations. In that context, attention was drawn to the role of the Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, including Socioeconomic Aspects, as well as to its First Global Integrated Marine Assessment, in terms of supporting informed decision-making. The work of the Group of Experts was highlighted in that regard. The importance of building upon the Assessment in the second cycle of the Regular Process was stressed.

100. The recognition by the International Maritime Organization of the growing role of women in the maritime sector was welcomed.

101. With regard to the issue of migration, attention was drawn to the need to clarify the law of the sea aspects.

102. Some delegations emphasized the need to ensure safety and security at sea, including addressing piracy. While the decrease in the number of piracy attacks was noted, concern was expressed over the increase in armed robbery, hostage-taking and arms trafficking. The need for coordinated efforts to address them was also underlined. In that regard, the need to take action in accordance with international law was stressed. One delegation drew a link between the issues of forced labour, smuggling and illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, highlighting the challenges in addressing transnational organized crimes.

103. Some delegations called for enhanced cooperation and coordination to address illegal activities. In that regard, one delegation suggested establishing an international task force. The importance of monitoring, including through the use of vessel monitoring systems, and enforcement, as well as for flag State regulation, was highlighted.

104. Many delegations highlighted the importance of strengthening the capacity of States to implement the provisions of the Convention and related instruments, and to benefit from the oceans and their resources. In that context, ongoing assistance provided to, and capacity-building activities for, developing States, including training on the implementation of the Convention and marine scientific research, and the development of infrastructure and provision of updated scientific and technical knowledge, as well as modern equipment were noted. One delegation stressed that capacity-building should be demand-driven.

105. Some delegations provided information on the challenges they faced in their maritime zones, such as those relating to pollution and illegal activities, including illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and illegal dumping. Information on initiatives to address some of the challenges was also provided by some delegations. This included strategies relating to the protection and preservation of marine ecosystems; the designation of new marine protected areas; the conduct of biological studies; the establishment of fisheries monitoring centres and compulsory vessel monitoring systems; and increases in sanctions for vessels found to be engaged in illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing; measures to become parties to relevant regional and international instruments; and the revision or adoption of new policies and legislation consistent with the Convention.

106. A delegation noted the need to protect underwater cultural heritage, including through becoming party to the 2001 Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage.

107. Some delegations expressed their views regarding continuing disputes. The importance of the principles of international law, such as freedom of navigation and overflight, were recalled in that context, as was the obligation to settle disputes peacefully, including through negotiations, the Tribunal, the International Court of Justice, and arbitration.

108. One delegation observed that its people, in particular its fishermen, continued to face grave and continuous violations of their rights, including those enshrined in the Convention, noting the importance of this legal instrument for States under occupation that were striving for self-determination and the right to permanent sovereignty over their resources. That delegation also emphasized that its Government intended to take steps, in accordance with the Convention, to establish access and control over its maritime zones. It appealed to all States, entities and individuals to respect its maritime boundaries.

109. One delegation drew attention to developments relating to Crimea, including at the General Assembly and the International Maritime Organization, and legal issues relating to the application of the Convention in the maritime zones adjacent to the Crimean Peninsula. That delegation referred to its rights and jurisdiction in the maritime zones adjacent to the Crimean Peninsula and to the exercise of regulatory jurisdiction by another State in these zones, which it said constituted an internationally wrongful act which entails international responsibility. Another delegation observed that the Meeting lacked the mandate to consider substantive issues.

110. Some delegations referred to recent developments concerning the South China Sea/East Sea/West Philippine Sea and set out their respective positions in that regard. Concern was expressed by some delegations with regard to large-scale land reclamation, the construction of artificial islands, and military activity in the region. In this connection, one delegation noted that such activities represented a reasonable and legitimate exercise of sovereign rights and were conducted compatibly with international obligations concerning the protection of the marine environment and the safety of navigation. Some delegations highlighted the need for States to resolve maritime disputes peacefully. One delegation, in particular, underscored the obligation of States parties to participate in the mandatory dispute settlement mechanism established in the Convention when disputes arose. It also emphasized the role of arbitration in resolving disputes under the Convention. In that regard, it referred to the *South China Sea Arbitration* expressing the view that both parties to the case would be bound by the final award of the Arbitral Tribunal. Another delegation expressed the view that bilateral disputes concerning the application and interpretation of the Convention did not fall within the mandate of the Meeting, and emphasized the right of countries to choose freely the means of settling disputes peacefully, in particular through bilateral negotiations. That delegation expressed the view that the Convention did not govern issues relating to territorial sovereignty while the essence of the dispute concerned territorial sovereignty. It also recalled that it had a made a declaration under article 298 of the Convention not accepting any of the procedures provided for in section 2 of Part XV of the Convention with respect to, inter alia, matters concerning maritime boundary delimitation. It further expressed the view that the Arbitral Tribunal had acted ultra vires, and noted that it would not recognize any award by the Tribunal, as it would not have legal force and would not bind any party. The delegations of States concerned made references to the need to implement the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China

Sea and some called for the early conclusion of a code of conduct in the South China Sea. The Meeting took note of the report of the Secretary-General under article 319 and of the views expressed by delegations under that agenda item, and decided that the same agenda item would be included in the provisional agenda of the twenty-seventh Meeting.

IX. Other matters

Accession by Azerbaijan

111. Noting the continued steady progress towards the goal of universal participation in the Convention, the President informed the Meeting that, on 16 June 2016, Azerbaijan had acceded to the Convention, bringing the total number of parties to 168, including the European Union.

112. Many delegations welcomed the new State party to the Convention, which brought the Convention closer to the goal of universality.

Invitations to the Meetings of States Parties

113. The secretariat drew attention to rule 18 of the Rules of Procedure regarding the participation of observers in the Meetings of States Parties, which provides in paragraph 3 that the specialized agencies of the United Nations system, the International Atomic Energy Agency and other intergovernmental organizations that are invited to the Meeting may also participate as observers. According to the practice of the Meeting, intergovernmental organizations that wished to be invited to the Meetings of States Parties as observers needed to first convey in writing their interest in being invited. Their request was then brought to the attention of the Meeting, which then decided whether such an organization may be invited in the future. In this connection, the representative of the secretariat noticed that this practice was different from that of many other intergovernmental bodies in which an invitation was routinely extended to entities that had received a standing invitation to participate as observers in the work of the General Assembly pursuant to its relevant resolutions and intergovernmental organizations with competence in ocean affairs. Accordingly, the secretariat sought guidance as to whether the Meeting wished to continue the existing practice or align it to that of the subsidiary bodies of the General Assembly.

114. The Meeting decided to align its practice to that of the subsidiary bodies of the General Assembly.

Trust funds

115. The secretariat provided information on the current status and projected funding requirements trust funds administered by the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea, Office of Legal Affairs, other than those related to the work of the Commission, which were considered under agenda item 10.[13]

116. With regard to the Voluntary Trust Fund to assist States in the settlement of disputes through the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, the secretariat

[13] See paras. 65-68 above.

informed the Meeting that a contribution had been received from Finland in 2016. As at the end of May 2016, the trust fund had an approximate balance of $91,000.

117. Regarding the Voluntary Trust Fund for the Regular Process for global reporting and assessment of the state of the marine environment, including socioeconomic aspects, no contributions had been received since the last Meeting. However, contributions had been pledged by the Netherlands, New Zealand and the Republic of Korea. As at the end of May 2016, the trust fund had an approximate balance of $30,000.

118. With respect to the Hamilton Shirley Amerasinghe Memorial Fellowship on the Law of the Sea Trust Fund, Ireland and Monaco had made contributions and a previously received contribution from Nigeria, that had not been earmarked, had been applied to the trust fund. However, no award had been made for a 2016 fellowship, owing to a lack of funds. As at the end of May 2016, the trust fund had an approximate balance of $30,000. The secretariat observed that a balance of $65,000 was required to make an award for a fellowship. Without sufficient contributions by September 2016 it would not be possible to make an award for a fellowship for 2017.

119. Regarding the Voluntary Trust Fund for the purpose of assisting developing countries, in particular least developed countries, small island developing States and landlocked developing States, to attend meetings of the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea, no contributions had been received since the last Meeting. As at the end of May 2016, the trust fund had an approximate balance of $11,000. This meant that, without additional funds, it would not be possible to support the participation of developing States, including panellists, in future meetings should the mandate be renewed by the General Assembly.

120. With regard to newly established trust funds, including the Voluntary Trust Fund for the purpose of assisting developing countries, in particular the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States, to attend the meetings of the preparatory committee and an intergovernmental conference on the development of an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction and the UN-Oceans Database Trust Fund, a contribution had been pledged to the former trust fund but no contributions had yet been received since their establishment.

121. The secretariat expressed its gratitude to all States that had made contributions to the trust funds and reiterated that the chronic underfunding of many of them was a serious problem that, inter alia, could soon undermine the ability of the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf to function. In this connection, the secretariat drew attention to General Assembly resolution 70/235 and encouraged Member States to contribute to the various trust funds.

122. The secretariat provided information on the contributions procedure, noting that clear instructions from donor States as to the trust fund to which any contribution was being made would allow for more timely availability of funds. The Office of Legal Affairs would be sending a communication to all States in this

regard and to encourage contributions to all trust funds administered by the Division.

123. Several delegations stressed the urgency of contributing to the trust funds administered by the Division, and expressed their appreciation to the States that had made contributions in the past and to those that had made pledges.

124. The Meeting took note of the information on trust funds that had been provided by the secretariat.

Forthcoming elections

125. The secretariat drew attention to the process of nomination for the elections of seven members of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, pursuant to article 5, paragraph 1, of the Statute of the Tribunal and of twenty-one members of the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf, pursuant to article 2, annex II to the Convention, which would take place at the twenty-seventh Meeting of States Parties in June 2017.

126. With respect to the election of members of the Tribunal, the Registrar of the Tribunal would address in due course a written communication calling for nominations. Nominations would have to be made through a communication addressed directly to the Registrar of the Tribunal, and not to the secretariat.

127. With regard to the election of members of the Commission, the Secretary-General would circulate a communication in due course calling for nominations. Nominations would have to be made through a communication addressed to the Secretary-General and sent to the Division.

128. The secretariat stressed that, with respect to both elections, nominations of candidates made before or after the period specified in the communications from the Registrar and the Secretary-General would not be accepted.

Acknowledgments

129. The President of the twenty-sixth Meeting of States Parties expressed her appreciation to the interpreters, translators and conference officers for their assistance and services provided during the Meeting, as well as to the staff of the Division.